

A Year in Review

01 Apr 2023 – 31 Mar 2024



District Lead Volunteer Review

Despite the challenges, we've had a triumphant year in Walsall. The return of face-to-face Scouting, a testament to our leaders' and volunteers' resilience and adaptability, has been a significant achievement. Their safe and successful delivery of varied and exciting programmes across Walsall is commendable and fills us with pride and inspiration.

The growth and recovery of groups and the broader district function have been crucial themes this past year. At Census 2024, we were back to 70% of what we were in 2020 for young people 6-18 – a significant achievement! With 323 young people, 16 young leaders, and 64 assistant leaders and section assistants, the numbers are a testament to our potential for further growth and fill us with optimism and hope for the future!

On the theme of Growth, I'm delighted that we managed to open a new Scout Troop at 62nd Walsall. I want to express my heartfelt thanks to the team there for their unwavering dedication in welcoming our ever-growing Scouting family.

However, whilst overall, the district has dropped in young people since 2023 by 9%, there is definite potential to turn this around and start growing. Key challenges, as always, are around adult volunteers, which enable us to deliver what we do best and, ultimately, reduce our waiting lists. We are getting there, though, and the Census reported a 3% increase in leaders, assistant leaders and section assistants since 2023!

Focusing on Adults, a key area we need to improve in the district is supporting the Adults we have worked hard to recruit and retain. Whilst Transformation should make it easier to recruit and retain new adults, we also need to ensure our support offerings in the district are suitable, and we engage to ensure everyone gets what they need so they feel supported to offer a quality scouting experience to our young people. My thanks go to Sonia Linton (Support Team Leader) and Lee Bragginton (Support Team Member) for their continued support in this area with us joining up with Walsall North, which we will strive to improve further in the next year.

By supporting our Adults, we should encourage natural growth. In addition to natural growth, thanks to the hard work and dedication of Lynn Richardson (County Lead Volunteer) in gaining the funding from Headquarters, West Mercia now has a dedicated Growth and Communities Officer, Clare Vas, and we have projects on the Growth plan to stabilise the groups who can use her support. We are genuinely grateful for Lynn's efforts.

We also need to ensure we recognise all our Adults, and we will start to look more into who we can reward with Good Service Awards in 2024 and beyond. We must also recognise Long Service and the dedication and time given by our volunteers. I want to mention the below awards from this year:

- Tim Carver (3rd Walsall): Chief Scout's 5 years Service Award,
- Richard Hinton (3rd Walsall): Chief Scout's 5 years Service Award,

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- Nathan King (3rd Walsall): Chief Scout's 5 years Service Award,
- Richard Clarke (20th Walsall): Chief Scout's 5 years Service Award,
- Liaqat Ali (58th Walsall): Chief Scout's 5 years Service Award,
- Nazia Rehman (58th Walsall): Chief Scout's 5 years Service Award,
- Sadia Tahir (62nd Walsall): Chief Scout's 5 years Service Award,
- Phil Tranter (4th Darlaston): Chief Scout's 5 years Service Award,
- Paul Brandon (6th Walsall): Chief Scout's 15 years Service Award and Chief Scout's Commendation for Good Service,
- Ade Powell (3rd Walsall): Chief Scout's 15 years Service Award,
- Jacob Reeves (20th Walsall): Chief Scout's 15 years Service Award,
- Clare Doggett (20th Walsall): Chief Scout's 25 years Service Award,
- Brad Bradley (20th Walsall): Chief Scout's 25 years Service Award,
- John Perry (6th Walsall): Chief Scout's 40 years Service Award,
- Annabel Wise (20th Walsall): Award for Merit; and,
- Sandra Hewitt (3rd Walsall): Award for Merit,

International scouting was a highlight of 2023, with the West Mercia contingent attending the World Scout Jamboree 2023 in Korea. The young people had a tremendous experience and demonstrated great flexibility and resilience.

In January 2024, our Group Lead Volunteers met with others from across the County to discuss Transformation and what will happen when we move into the new world. With critical themes around How we volunteer together, Welcome, Learning and Our Volunteering Culture, it is exciting to be part of the change and see how this improves our experience for new and existing volunteers and the broader movement. Thank you to everyone who is supporting Transformation.

We have moved from Executive Committees to Trustee Boards and sorted out other complex matters this year as part of Transformation. We have now managed to recruit a District Chair, David Rowley, and a full Trustee Board will be in operation following tonight's AGM.

My final thanks go to Andy Lyndon, who served as the district commissioner for over fourteen years and passed on the responsibility to me at the start of the 2024-2025 calendar year. Andy faced several challenges as District Commissioner, dealing with issues in different Groups and navigating the pandemic. However, with the support of the broader district team and Group Lead Volunteers, he ensured that the district continued to.

[Dan Phillips \(Dan.Phillips@walsallscouts.org.uk\)](mailto:Dan.Phillips@walsallscouts.org.uk)

District Lead Volunteer

District Youth Lead Review

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This year, there have been 15 young members who have had their YouShape awards, and we will be working within the district to get more YouShape pushed out. If you want me to come and support YouShape, please let me know.

[Jake Durbin \(Jake.Durbin@walsallboroughscouts.org.uk\)](mailto:Jake.Durbin@walsallboroughscouts.org.uk)

District Youth Lead

Support Team Leader Review

This report details my experience and responsibilities as the Support Team Leader. It outlines my essential functions, the strategies employed to improve Scouting in the District, and the outcomes achieved during the last year.

Ensuring that the district was on track with mandatory training was crucial for maintaining high standards of Scouting. My activities included supporting leaders who are not computer literate/confident in completing safety and safeguarding training. This has included visiting leaders to provide one-on-one support at a time that suits them with my trusty laptop and showing them quite literally clicking the mouse, etc. Occasionally, I have sat with them and read the questions and the multiple-choice answers (due to dyslexia/cataracts). I have then emailed training certificates to the compliance team. Assisting the volunteers who need their training validated around the district to ensure compliance is achieved, and again, this helps with compliance and quality Scouting across all the groups.

I have also been available to support Groups when they have been short on leaders for activities/events and camps. Sometimes, this has been on short notice, but my husband does understand. (I hope!)

I am also running a district Support Day in October to support any leaders who would like to attend the day at Beaudesert; volunteers have completed the online forms regarding the support they require and the skills they are happy to share. This will hopefully build leaders' confidence and encourage them to try new activities, such as knots and paracords, and ways of making scouting easier for them, such as OSM, badge orders, risk assessments, etc.

Finally, I am supporting the District Beaver & Cub Winter Event at Beaudesert; currently, we expect around 300 youth members, along with leaders from each group.

I started to work with Dan after he took over from James, and it has been very different. I know what is happening; it hasn't been at the last minute, and I have been given the necessary information to support the district. I have begun working more closely with Nick Chadd (14-24 Team Leader) and Jenny Purawal (Support Team Member) over the last few years as part of the district team. I have started to work with Thomas and Charlie over the last couple of months, and it's great to work with younger leaders with different skill sets and a passion for Scouting.

[Sonia Linton \(Sonia.Linton@walsallboroughscouts.org.uk\)](mailto:Sonia.Linton@walsallboroughscouts.org.uk)

Support Team Leader

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14-24 Team Leader Review

The past twelve months have been a time for the Explorer Section to strengthen itself in many ways. Importantly, we have met regularly as a team to ensure that support is available. I have also seen an increase in the Nights Away Activities that are taking place, which is crucial as it is central to what we do as Scouts.

We have seen several changes in the last year, which will positively impact how we Scout as Explorers. Namely, the shift from group names to self-directed naming will have a positive effect. It strengthens the Unit's relationship with their host Group and frees them up to take Young People from other Groups.

Young Leaders has worked well with two cohorts going through (the 2nd one coming together for a camp in October), and the skills that they have picked up and developed are now being implemented in their sections. Truly Leaders of the Future!

The Duke of Edinburgh's (DofE) Award is going well, with 2 Bronze and 1 Silver cohorts also going through it. All participants worked exceptionally well on their Expedition and their Volunteering, Physical and Skills sections.

Explorers are in a great position; we have plenty to look forward to with trips that will take Explorer Scouts on adventures that will be a fantastic experience for all involved. DofE will be back up and running in the autumn term, and young leaders have a great future in which to thrive.

Lastly, thank you to all the Adult Volunteers involved in Explorers, for it is you who make things happen. Lastly, thanks must go to the Explorers; your willingness to succeed and participate in Scouting week in and week out makes it all worthwhile.

Nick Chadd (Nick.Chadd@walsallboroughscouts.org.uk)

14-24 Team Leader

Scout Network Section Team Leader Review

Network has officially started and is in full swing. So far, we have held two successful Network meetings: a "What is Network and what do we want from Network" and a catch-up to discuss Revolution 2025. We have Bowling booked for the 23rd of August and camp booked for October, which has had a fair bit of interest, and we are currently looking at going to Revolution next April. I am looking into top awards (Kings Scout, DofE gold, etc) and will have more information. We currently have 38 network-aged members. It would be good to get more network-aged members involved in creating a solid network section within the district.

Charlie Rowley (Charlie.Rowley@walsallboroughscouts.org.uk)

Scout Network Section Team Leader